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Yeppa* ⟷ *Wawa* and *Yukiyuko (sister ⟷ older and younger brother) 593 602

There are the same varieties of yeppa as of wawa and yukiyuko. There is little difference in the behavior of a yukiyuko-yeppa and a wawa-yeppa relationship, except that if yukiyuko is an adolescent or child, he will not have an older brother's control over his sisters; but if he is an adult he has as much influence in directing their affairs as has his older brother. Yeppa calls any brother born before her "wawa" and any brother born after her "yukiyuko," exactly as a man would. With the above reservation, we can treat the yukiyuko-yeppa and the wawa-yeppa relationships as one, remembering of course the varying degree of closeness in the relationship between wawa and yukiyuko, and realizing its effect on the relationship we are now considering.

The sister and brother relationship is surrounded with taboos. If a brother speaks in the hearing of his sister, tribal or blood, he utters his words in a low voice, since she is not supposed to hear him. She speaks in the same manner before him. He never talks to her directly, nor she to him. He does not use obscenities in front of her as he would before most women (including his mother, daughter's daughter, and father's sister), nor will he allow anyone else to indulge in such language before her in his presence. They never sleep in the same hut or camp except as infants. At a very early age they are separated. Yeppa always helps her brothers if they are involved in a fight. She would not only ask assistance of her relatives but also give aid herself unless she felt a divided loyalty, in which case she would, with the help of other women, try to prevent a fight. [576] [513]

A brother is like a second father to a sister. If she is caught in adultery he gives her a beating and, if not stopped, tries to kill her. When Dooper's wife ran off with Bengaliwe her near brothers gave her an unmerciful beating and might have killed her had not other relatives interfered. Even if a brother saw her own husband copulating with his sister, he would become angry and try to beat her. However, he is careful not to see them. 583 684

A yukiyuko always accompanies yeppa when she first goes to her husband's clan to live after their marriage. The brother is usually pre-adolescent, but sometimes he may be older. He is supposed to look out for his sister, seeing that she does not commit adultery, preventing other men from seducing her, and by his presence protecting her from ill treatment by her husband. 593 591

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Mutual fidelity is demanded by husband and wife. She is supposed to stay away from all other men, and according to tribal law he is not allowed to cohabit with any women except his wives. Nevertheless, adultery is very common. A woman, if she has not been married before, is supposed to come to her husband sexually untouched. The idea back of this is that she has always been his wife and could therefore not have had physical relations with another man. Frequently women have had intercourse with other dué before starting to live openly with their own husbands. This causes much indignation and usually results in a beating for the girl and a heated quarrel between the husband and the lover, who usually allows the outraged husband to use more vituperation, since the lover and the tribe recognize that he is in the wrong, and it pleases the husband to believe that he has had the better of the argument.

The attitude of the male part of the tribe toward the infidelity of a galle may be seen in the following story believed by the natives. It concerns the father of Danitcha, Danitcha's father's young galle, and her lover. Danitcha is an old man who is still living and belongs to the people along the Murngin borders. It happened when Danitcha was still a fish (unborn), he says, and when his father was a young man. We shall let Danitcha tell the tale.

Back in the bush my father came; he called to his young galle mielk, "Come on, we'll go look for wild honey." The woman went with him. Before this she had had no sexual relations with him. He saw the tracks of a bandicoot going inside a large hollow log. He crawled up to the tree. He said, "Come on, you come on up and look, too. I think we'll catch a bandicoot." She came up. He said, "You squat down with your hands on your knees ready to catch him if he comes out."

The man was lying down pretending to look into the hollow tree's hole, but he was casting his eye up at the girl's vagina. "Oh," he thought, "someone has opened her before, and she's my galle, and I haven't." He knew this because the opening was large. He got up. "I couldn't find anything in there," he said, "I think we'd better go." "Let's go drink some good water," he said. "Where?" "This way at a rock pool that I know about." They went to the rock. It rose straight into the air and was high like the clouds. The rock had a forked stick ladder. It was very long. He climbed up the pole. In the center of the rock was a deep hole that ran through it far down into the earth. It had water in it far below, and it stank with the dead bodies of women who had been untrue to their husbands. He pretended to drink, then came down. "Has it good water?" she asked. "Yes, it's full up. You go up and have a drink. I'll wait for

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684
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you." She climbed higher and higher until she reached the top. She looked down and the man looked small. Then she found the rotting bones of the hundreds of women left there to die by their husbands since the time of Wongar because of their adulteries. She tried to hurry away. She looked down, the ladder was gone. She cried out. "Dué! Dué! Dué! I'm a young woman, and I am yours, you've never had me. Look at me! This vagina is yours! These breasts are yours! Look!" He looked at her and in sign language he told her that she'd had another man. He walked away.

She cried and cried and looked down from all sides of the rock, but there was no way to escape. She cried and cried, but it was no use. She could see the forked stick ladder far below, where her dué had thrown it.

The dué went to camp. The girl's mother sent word (she was mokul rumeru to him and therefore could not talk to him) to ask where her daughter had gone. "I don't know," he lied, "I've been out by myself. She didn't come with me. All of you go look for her." They looked for five days, but no one found her. The man went away quietly. He went to the rock and stood off some distance to see if he could see her. "Ah, she's alive yet." He made a camp and stayed. At the large camp people still looked for her. He came back to the main camp. After six days he went again to the rock. The woman was very near death and in a state of coma. She was very weak and her eyes were closed. He went back to camp and stayed five or six days more and then came again to the rock. He couldn't see her. He raised the forked stick and crawled to the top of the rock. On top it was flat all over. In the middle was the deep hole. His galle, while kicking in her death struggle, had fallen into it. He took a spear, hooked it to his spear-thrower, and threw it straight into the air. The spear came down and went into the rock hole and fell into the body of the dead woman. When the spear hit her he could hear the drone of giant blowflies in the depths of the rock cavern. He went back to camp. Everyone was still looking for the girl. The dué joined in the hunt. "I think," he said, "that maybe someone has stolen her, or it may be someone has killed her magically."

He sent word to all her people to help him find her. They looked for days and days but she was never found. This happened in the country of the Nullikan and Rainbarngo tribes.

Sometimes the husbands only keep their wives there a few days to teach them a lesson, and then let them return to camp. At other times the husband takes the lover and wife to this rock and leaves them. When they arrive at the rock the husband says, "You two can go get some water." They both go up at the same time. When the woman and her lover arrive on the flat stone, he takes the ladder down. One lover cried out, "What about this woman of yours? Don't you want her?" "Oh, you can have her now, I'll make her a present to you."

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The story is told to the women and believed by them. It was recorded at a time when there was much serious talk among the men that two women caught by their husbands in adultery should be sent there. 684 837

If a wife continues to be unfaithful she might be killed by her dué and members of her own family. Usually the dué would depend upon a magician to accomplish this (see Magic, pages 194-206).

A beating is the usual punishment for a wife's adultery. Garawerpa, an old man of the Daiuror clan, put fire on his wives' vaginas, as did Binindaio when their galles copulated with Willidjungo, the medicine man. With the beating goes a severe tongue-lashing. An outraged wife who has caught her husband in a sexual relation with another woman resorts to public abuse of her mate for his infidelities. Her obscenity and abuse are usually more proficiently and much more adequately expressed than a husband's. 837 578

At noon one day Bruk Bruk, the young and attractive wife of Lika, who had inherited her from an older brother, accused Djolli, a man from a more distant clan, of trying to seduce her in the bush. A tremendous noise was made in the camp. All the relatives of the parties concerned talked at once, and the two men armed themselves with spears, spear-throwers, and clubs and charged at each other, exchanging curses.

Djolli was angry because he claimed to be falsely accused; and so was Lika because he knew something was wrong, for either his wife had defended her virtue against Djolli, or she had succumbed and then accused him. In either case his self-esteem had been injured. Djolli's wife, an older woman, no longer attractive, stood by, and instead of helping her husband, the usual thing for a wife, screamed at him: "You belong to me. I am your sexual partner. You are like a dog. You are incestuous and sleep with your own mothers and sisters. Why don't you keep your penis where it belongs—in me, not other women?"

The galle has another recourse. She can attack and abuse her husband's mistress. A wife usually feels that it is the other woman's fault anyway.

Balliman, a young man noted for his fighting and dancing abilities, was Mumulaiki's lover, so camp gossip had it. Balliman's wife (he had inherited her), who was much older than he, took her digging stick and, with the aid of much cursing, gave Mumulaiki a thorough thrashing. Both women were in a fainting condition when the fight was stopped by others. Their heads were cut open and they were covered with bruises and cuts.

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waku, gawel and waku, and one case has been reported of momelker and dumungur. This last is very rare and has a strong taboo against it. All relationships except the above are completely taboo, and no one would any more think of such an extra-legal union than a normal man in our society would consider a liaison with his own mother. All the above affairs would be with distant relatives and not the actual ones. 837

Much indignation usually is caused by a gawel-waku liaison if discovered, though several were observed. This sentiment would not be that of the injured wife or husband alone, but of the tribe generally. Men having such a relationship with waku or momelker would be called dogs and considered evil-doers even by their own people, who might be defending them at the time from the attacks of the girl's husbands and relatives. The woman would most certainly receive a severe beating and occasionally be killed. 837 684

The regulation that a younger brother is not allowed near an older brother's wife whereas an older brother may be near a younger brother's of course applies here, since, except through a wrong marriage, all men who call each other brothers would call the same women galle, and they in turn would call these men dué. Even with such limitations the dué-galle affair is a most common form of adultery because, with the exception of this one taboo, there is no restriction to deter the pair or to make the most orthodox Murngin feel he is doing anything wrong. The momo-kaminyer relationship is the next least provocative of social condemnation. Of course, this would not be actual father's mother and brother's son's son, but a younger woman and a man in this relationship. 837 [607]

The men's attitude toward sexual union is one of extreme interest. While some speak but little of it, others make sex, food, and war the three subjects of their conversation. The women, however, seem even more interested than the men. They, too, vary considerably in their attitude; some are continually in trouble because of attempting to satisfy their desires by seducing young men, while others remain quiet and faithful to one man. All the men testified that there were no cold women; or rather, as they put it, all women were interested in the sexual relation. The evidence seems to verify their contentions; but caution must be exercised here since no man would admit that women were not interested in him. However, many of the men complained that their wives and other female relatives had too great an interest. 831 [833]

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If armed conflict breaks out in a camp where a ceremony is being celebrated, the ritual is usually stopped, either because the participants are afraid to stay, for they may be killed in their sleep, or because the leaders of the ceremony become angry at what they consider an insult to their totems.

It is believed that while a totemic emblem is in camp all fighting should cease, and any infraction of the tribal law is considered a direct insult to the totemic emblem and therefore to the clan. The leader of a Narra ceremony, at which the totemic emblems are used, almost always stops the ritual if there has been any serious infraction of tribal law, because he does not want to accept the consequences of an affront to his totem. It is believed that the totem itself would seek vengeance upon any leader who did not protect its interests at such a time. The writer saw two Narra, a Djungguan, and two Gunabibi ceremonies terminated because of the outbreak of fighting. The two Narra were stopped by the leaders because they said their totems were insulted, the Djungguan and Gunabibi because of the fighters' fear of death and also because of the anger of the leader of the ceremony. Another Narra ceremony was not stopped when a fight followed the catching of two women in adultery by their husbands. The women were thoroughly beaten—less because of the offense itself than because it took place while a great ceremony was being held—and might have been killed but for their escape in the black of night by swimming to a nearby island.

The deliberate stopping of a ceremony demonstrates that warfare and ceremony have clearly antithetical traits. The great ceremonies tend to enlarge the group solidarity both in numbers and in extent of territory and to create a smoothly functioning unit out of a large number of clans, but warfare destroys this unity and reduces the limits of solidarity to the clan.

Since both traits are necessary to the tribe's social organization, a nice periodical balance has been struck; at one period ceremonialism controls the people's activities, and later war is uppermost in the relations of the local groups.

Effects of Warfare on Population

A fairly accurate estimate places the population of this area around three thousand. The genealogical material gathered by the writer shows about an equal number of women and men, with possibly slightly more men than women. This means that there are about fifteen hun-

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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solidarity (ceremonial), is partly responsible for the solid foundation of the kinship structure in Murngin society. Warfare also helps to prevent the breaking of tribal laws by the threat of retaliation from other social groups. Finally, it acts as the ultimate police power in the functioning of Murngin society. It is the threat of its force which ultimately prevents flagrant breaking of tribal taboos.

Causes of War

Of seventy-two recorded battles of the last twenty years in which members of Murngin factions were killed, fifty were for blood revenge —the desire to avenge the killing of a relative, usually a clansman, by members of another clan. Of these, fifteen were deliberate killings, against the tradition of what is fair cause for a war, and because it was felt that the enemies had killed the wrong people. Ten killings were due to stealing or obtaining by illegal means a woman who belonged to another clan. Five supposedly guilty magicians were killed by the clan members of victims of black magic. Five men were slain for looking at a totemic emblem under improper circumstances and thereby insulting the owning clan and endangering the clan's spiritual strength.

The idea underlying most Murngin warfare is that the same injury should be inflicted upon the enemy group that one's own group has suffered. This accomplished, a clan feels satisfied; otherwise, there is a constant compulsion toward vengeance, causing a continuous restlessness among those who are out to "buy back" the killing of one of their clansmen. The stealing of a woman provokes the same spirit, since the group feels itself injured; and only the return of the woman and a ceremonial fight, or the stealing of another woman, will satisfy the hurt to its self-esteem, unless the clan has retaliated by killing or wounding one of the enemy clansmen. The same feeling is instigated by the improper viewing of the totem—an insult and an injury to the entire clan.

Any of the above causes for war may be given deliberately or by accident, but in either case warfare is a certain consequence. If a young man chances upon an old man engaged in making a totemic emblem, the former is killed; or if a man is accidentally killed in a fight by a member of a friendly group, the dead man's people retaliate. There is, nevertheless, considerable feeling that an accident should not cause open hostilities, but it has small influence upon the public opinion of those who believe themselves injured.

There are a number of forms of ritualistic injury. If women look

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view of their totem. This was to put him off his guard; a few days later they ambushed and killed him. 698

If one of the members of a clan breaks a number of the ritualistic taboos he is seldom killed by members of his own clan. Usually the old men arrange for his death by members of another clan. If such offenses went unpunished the whole structure of Murngin society would fall to pieces, since in time the women and children would be aware of the secrets of the men's associations, and with the knowledge common, the ceremonial ideas would lose their significance. 688 696

Should a young man make a totemic emblem without the permission of the clan's ceremonial leader, the usual method of dealing with this insult to the clan would be to kill him. 688

The finding of the first wild bees' nest, because of its magical significance, is a very important matter to a young boy. Should an older man eat any of it or not allow the boy to consume the honey that was found, the father and father-in-law of the boy would start a camp fight with the man's group. 688 628

At the beginning of the dry season all the underbrush is burned off to secure better hunting, frequently destroying a log coffin. The dead man's clan is always offended, but killing seldom results, for the deed is felt to have been accidental, and no strong feeling surrounds the bones of a dead man. 688 673

The use of obscenity and profanity against a man always results in a camp fight. Profanity usually reflects not only on the man but on his clan and carries an incestuous connotation. Occasionally quarrels result from an unfair division of the game killed in the hunt, but not always open warfare, since those who feel they had a right to the game are near relatives whose solidarity is too strong to allow fighting. 578

Adulteries may cause a husband to give only his wife a thorough beating, but usually the lover is also held responsible and a fight is a consequence. The fights are ordinarily of the nirimaoi-yolno (a fight within the camp) type. If the lover attempts to steal her the more serious narrup (secret killing) and maringo (night attack on a camp) are used, because wife-stealing is a much more serious offense. 684

A number of customs attend these killings that serve as causes for war. When the body of a man killed in a fight or by magic is disinterred, the finger bones are given both to the near relatives of the victim's clan and to related groups as relics to remind them of their duty of blood vengeance. The relic is wrapped with fiber string and covered with beeswax and parrot feathers. It is placed at the bottom 765 628

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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Marriage and Relationship

578 595 In the social life of the people polygamy is generally practised, some men having as many as eight wives. While a good deal may be said in justification of this practice among a nomadic people, such as these aborigines are, it is a very fruitful cause of trouble and strife. This is occasioned by the jealousy which older wives frequently feel toward their younger tribal [584] sisters, and also by the fact that, because of this system, many young men of marriageable age are unable to obtain partners. This latter fact, not unnaturally, leads to the stealing of women and general breaches of the moral laws of the tribe.

562 627 672 684 One, to us, highly unjust custom is to punish a woman who has been stolen, even though she has been taken away by force, much more severely than the man who has stolen her. In most cases she is, when recovered, badly speared or beaten, in some cases so severely treated as to be killed, while the man who has taken her, unless he occupy a prohibited relationship to the woman, is usually let off with a severe lecturing.

627 684 Generally all the relatives of the wronged husband who are present will join in this brutal chastisement of the woman, their action being justified by the fact that they "feel sorry" for their fellow-tribesman. Perhaps experience has proved the value of this method of controlling domestic relationships.

582 584 Marriage, as previously indicated, is regulated by the social organisation of the tribe. There are only certain men of the opposite moiety who are eligible to become the husband of any particular girl or woman. To one of these men the girl is given in infancy, and, though this man has nothing directly to do with her until she reaches the age of puberty, he is required, during the years of her infancy and girlhood, to fulfil certain obligations, such as the making of presents of food, weapons or utensils, to her father.

[585] Because of this custom, there is nothing approaching a ceremony of marriage among these people, the girl during infancy as really belonging to the man as she will later on when he actually 587 768 takes her to wife. When a man dies, his wife or wives immediately pass over to one or more of his tribal brothers, so that, excepting in the case of a few very old women, there are no widows, and there are no orphans in this aboriginal community.

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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159 you. You're not a man." This makes her quiet. I think sometimes if I did
593 have a sweetheart I wouldn't tell her, because none of the other men do
[837] when they have them.

159 When I was a young man, women were more careful and better than
837 they are now. My brother, Badunga, is just starting to grow a mustache. This no-good woman we call the Mokoi [evil ghost] has already tried to seduce him. My brother was out hunting the other day with some other boys, and when he was a little bit away from them that Mokoi woman saw him. She was getting shells, away from the rest of the women. She is no longer a young woman. She has no children because she has copulated with too many men who were not her husbands. She sneaked up on him and talked very nice to him, but my brother Badunga did nothing and came away. He was afraid, and besides he did not like the woman.

159 Badunga told me. I went down to her husband's camp and told him.
684 I called that Mokoi out and gave her a very hard beating. Her husband, who is my "half-father," did nothing. When I had finished he took a spear-thrower and started beating her too. All the people in the camp said that was very good and was what she needed.

159 Women before were different. They sat down more quiet than they do
837 now. This one, who is now Dimala's wife, who used to be my sweetheart when I was a young boy, seduced one of the Ritarngo boys. He is too young. I said, "I don't know what is the matter with you women now. You are going after younger and younger boys all the time for sweethearts. I shall have to watch Marl-ma-leen and Pulli [his 18-months-old son and three-year-old boy], or you will have them out too. You are ruining our young men because you are teaching them to have too many women who don't belong to them. They won't sit quiet with their own wives when they have them because you women teach them another way. When we old men [836] were young, a man had one sweetheart and no more until he was married and had proper wives of his own."

159 If the sweetheart I had a long time ago would come to me now and
572 ask for food I must give it to her. I would not have sexual relations with
837 her now because I am a married man and that would be wrong. When I go to her camp she gives me food. Her husband is a good man; he says to that woman, "Give Mahkarolla some food. He used to be your sweetheart." If he were no good and jealous, he would growl at the woman and tell her not to give me anything to eat. I haven't any sweethearts now. Dimala's wife used to be my sweetheart a long time ago. She likes me very much now. Sometimes she comes around and wants me to go out to the bush with her but I say, "No, I've got a wife. I have children." I will not "play" with another woman. I would get a baby (pages 74-92).

797 speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder
754 Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham,
[177 Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port
184] Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it brought the people who had accompanied the Mission into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they
609 came to regard the people of the west—whom they called
186 *warnba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since,
[152] resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

797 Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission
728 in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the
722 mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack
609 did not occur.

186 As often occurs when a people are brought into contact with those of a different culture, the natives from the east tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded
[530] as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *warnba*, one informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister
[835 tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to
684] mention the name of a woman in the presence of her brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirirri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation, punished by the death of both parties.

582 The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its
835 origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant that members of clans of opposite moieties within the tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry, since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between
582 whom marriage was permitted were actually members of
835 the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their
152 neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that
186 were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of
[26] them '*nganak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

[p. 99(A)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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134 humus are swept into the swamps or out to sea. The residue
132 from this fierce erosion is the typical clay, gravel, and stone of Arnhem Land. Nevertheless, with the first cloudbursts, the harassed country makes an astounding recovery. In an
137 incredibly short time a thick growth of high coarse grass
136 covers the rocky hills and sandy valleys, yams spring to life on gravel slopes, and animal and bird life is rejuvenated; red kangaroos, agile wallabies, opossums, mice, snakes, goannas, emus, jungle fowls, ducks, geese, spoonbills, herons, brolgas, and many more in kind grow fat and lazy from the
132 lavish hand of nature. But the vicious circle is not to be avoided. Winds swing back to the south-east and the nightmare of poverty again creeps over the land.

123 Exploring in the north-east brought us into contact with most of the scattered hordes so frequently referred to as the 'Killers of Arnhem Land'. In early September we were in the English Company's Islands, with the crew on the look-out for Yulengor; and when they saw a thin column of smoke on a beach, conjecture was rife as to who was in the camp. A dozen men and boys paddled out in their big dug-out canoes and came aboard somewhat diffidently. However, they were soon squatting round the hatch ex-
[276] changing news with the crew, all the time passing the one and only bush pipe backwards and forwards and drawing deeply the first tobacco smoke they had tasted for months. Most of them were strong and well developed, with bushy hair, but not too clean. As a concession to the white man
[291] they had donned strips of bark on string waistbands. They were reserved, but interested in all we did, and gladly accepted a couple of tomahawks, wire for fish-spears, and fish-hooks.

628 After the visitors had cast-off in their canoes, a crew-boy
684 mentioned that our visitors had just returned from killing a
682 man in revenge for the death of another in the hills behind our anchorage. It was a long story of intrigue and murder,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

and on the shore after dark, the horde told me about it in their own graphic fashion. Months previously, Burramai had legally married a certain woman. But she had a grown-up daughter and the trouble started when he also took this 'step-daughter' into his camp, knowing full well that she was not of his marriage-division and that tribally she was regarded as being as much his daughter as one of his own flesh and blood.

It was not long before this scandal of incest was known to all the hordes, and Murrkundi, a close relative of the women, came down through the islands looking for Burramai, and eventually found him by his fire near Melville Bay. Murrkundi wasted no time in taking up the argument: 'How many wives do you want? Isn't it enough that you have a legal wife from your own marriage-division? Or do you want women from other men's divisions as well?' Burramai was adamant: 'Yes, I want all the women I can get. All your talk about tabus and legal marriage is rubbish. I have had my step-daughter for many moons and no harm has come to me—I'm not dead yet.'

Murrkundi seemed to give way before this blasphemous outburst, and merely asked to be taken to see the women who were also his relatives; for in Arnhem Land, nomads are tribally related over distances of several hundred miles. When they had gone some distance Murrkundi feigned thirst, so his guide took him to a pool in a mountain stream, but he held back so that Burramai might drink first. Kneeling down to drink, Burramai saw in the clear water the reflection of Murrkundi fitting a spear to his spear-thrower with the obvious intention of killing him, so without drinking he rose quickly and wiped his lips, and said: 'That is good water. It has made me strong again. You have a drink now.'

Murrkundi drank in safety, for Burramai remembered that the water carried reflections and refrained from spearing the man. But once they were out of the stream, he told

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628 Murrkundi to lead the way because he wished to go into the
689 bushes for a few moments. Unsuspectingly Murrkundi fell
687 into the trap, and as he passed by, Burramai drove a spear through his arm and another into his back. Mortally wounded, Murrkundi fell to the ground and asked: 'What is all this about? Why have you speared me?'

'You know well enough. This is of your own making. When I was drinking I saw your reflection in the water as you fitted your spear to kill me.'

'If you think I intended to spear you, you are wrong. I never pointed the spear at you, I merely hooked it to my spear-thrower and pointed it away into the bush.'

'Well, I'm not like you and I don't understand your actions. If I see anyone pointing a spear at me I kill him.'

And with that Burramai turned on his heel and walked off, thinking to himself: 'He's not dead yet, but by midday the sun will be hot and he will die.'

Months later Murrkundi's friends found his skeleton and
[764] performed the customary ghost-laying ceremonies prior to packing the bones in bark and sending them to his horde on Elcho Island.

Burramai skilfully evaded several plots to kill him for the death of Murrkundi, until eventually a big inter-tribal gathering was held in Arnhem Bay, and was preceded by
[928] the usual peace-making ceremony in which old differences are settled. Burramai was present and went through his trial-by-ordeal and made peace with the relatives of the dead Murrkundi. Normally the matter should have ended there, but an old man went to Burramai as he sat in peace with his erstwhile enemies and abruptly reopened the dispute: 'Why did you kill Murrkundi? He didn't steal your wife or abuse your totem. Why did you spear him like a dog?' Old passions were revived. One unrestrained youth said: 'Let us finish him now.' Burramai, who was exhausted from the all-day trial-by-ordeal, then made the fatal error of

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running away, and two youths chased him into the jungle. One of them threw a spear which cut off his ear, and a second went through him. The avengers shouted to the horde, and one by one the men plunged their spears into the body and left it there, exposed and deliberately mutilated.

It was after midnight when the men finished this story of stark Stone Age justice, and I left them on the beach to return to the lugger to switch on a portable radio for an assurance that this was actually the twentieth century.

The rest of the trip was boisterous, with head winds and heavy seas, till we entered Port Bradshaw and beached the boat for repairs. Long ago, Macassar traders fished here for trepang, and East Indian tamarind trees fringing the shoreline marked their camps. I came across a curious formation of stones, and could make nothing of it till months later I read in Matthew Flinders's diary that in 1803 he saw similar formations in Blue Mud Bay. He could not solve the riddle till he met the Macassars in the English Company's Islands, where Pobasso, their chief, told him that the Malays had made the stone fireplaces to boil and cure their bêche-de-mer.

Bêche-de-mer is known locally by its Macassar name of trepang. Scientifically it is termed *Echinodermata* or 'Spiny-skinned'; seven hundred species are known to exist, and the few varieties in Australia range from nine to eighteen inches in length. They are rough skinned and look like lumps of rubber or bread rolls, with ridged bands extending around the entire length. Trepanging is the oldest industry in Australia, for it seems to have been at its height soon after Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay. Malay traders gathered it for the Chinese market. It must be cured for export, and the process is much the same as that used by the Malays. It is gutted, boiled in a strong solution of mangrove bark and sea-water, smoked over a slow fire, dried in the sun, and bagged. Chinese regard it as a delicacy and

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old men often results in 'Murramburr' or marriage-by-theft, 583
for if a young man cannot obtain a wife by peaceful means he sometimes attempts to capture women. Gwaipiji wanted a wife, so he considered the daughters of his tribal mothers-in-law, but he found that they were all married to tribal husbands. Turning his attention to one of them, he decided to steal her, so he went to her husband's country and waited till the women were hunting, and then he forced the girl to go with him.

Bununggu, the girl's husband, resented the theft and told 684 ●
his troubles to his brothers who were visiting a friendly 682
horde. He suggested that, as Gwaipiji was also friendly with them, he would eventually wander into their camp with the runaway wife, and they could then kill him and return the woman. They agreed to the proposal, so Bununggu camped with them till, in a few weeks, as he had anticipated, Gwaipiji arrived with the woman. Bununggu visited the erring couple and formally remonstrated with Gwaipiji: 'Why did you take my wife? She was never promised to you, whereas I have been paying for her for years. She is a good food-gatherer, and as I have no other wives I want her back.' But Gwaipiji also wanted the woman: 'All you say is true, but now that I have her I intend to keep her. I have no wives, all my mothers-in-law have disposed of their children, and I have no prospects of getting a wife. You, on the other hand, have three infants promised to you by the Inipi rite.'

Bununggu sat in silence as Gwaipiji thus signed his death warrant. He was not even listening, for he intended to kill Gwaipiji and recapture the woman. As the morning star rose and the camp was asleep, two youths came to Gwaipiji's fire and speared him in the back. Bununggu also blooded his spear, and in the resulting bedlam he dragged the woman to the side of his dying rival and made the customary speech over him, giving reasons for the attack, but more particularly

684 stating his case to bystanders: 'I "pushed" these young
681 men to kill you because you took my wife; she was not promised to you, she was never yours and always belonged to me. That is why you die.'

Wife-stealing usually results in the woman being brutally beaten or speared, and whether she goes willingly with the seducer or is forcefully stolen makes no difference to her punishment. She shows no resentment, and indeed she regards lenient treatment as a slight to her charms.

848 Because of Yulengor marriage customs the question of illegitimate children does not occur. There are frequent illicit relations, but as every girl has a husband her children do not arouse comment. If an irregular union should be openly consummated, the children do not suffer permanently, for irregular births are absorbed into the horde and into relationships which they would have had if their mother had been correctly mated.

163 Women have about two children each, though some have as many as five or six and one I know has a dozen. Many children are born, but the population is not increasing, except on mission stations where medical attention is avail-
[165] able and child-welfare taught. In the bush, infant mortality is high, and long periods elapse between births. Children
862 are not weaned till they are five or six years of age, and I have seen grandmothers ten years and more after the birth of their last child successfully suckling grandchildren.

844 In child-birth Nature is allowed to take her course and no assistance is given beyond occasional pressure. If the child is born normally and quickly, it probably survives, and so does the mother, but when anything abnormal occurs there
[845] is a stillborn child and the mother is often injured in a way that prevents her from having any more children. Blood accompanying the placenta is tabu and is meticulously buried. Ordinarily the mother is walking within three or four hours of a birth, and within a day she goes hunting.

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BLACK MAGIC

Our pedal-radio had broken down, and Mau and four other men took an urgent message for me to Milingimbi, a hundred and fifty miles away. It seemed that whilst he was there he was seduced by a married woman who came to his camp at night and told him to prepare the canoe whilst she collected the paddles. They made their get-away with no one the wiser, but next morning footprints and the missing canoe told the story. Two months later Mau and the woman came ashore at Yirrkala, and in the subsequent disputes and negotiations by the husband to regain his wife, Mau's horde stood firm, and Mau kept the woman. I was told that I had misinterpreted the incident, and that the woman had no active part in the elopement, for Mau had cast a Nyirrah spell over her, and her apparent enticement had all the time been inspired and controlled by him.

All rain is attributed to human agency, and heavy storms are invariably claimed by some wily magician. Distant clouds often lead to the casual remark that a horde living many miles in that direction is making rain. When I asked why they did not make rain to fall in the dry season, to cool the burning atmosphere and to make the yams grow, I was told that it is never made at that time of the year because they want the grass to die so that they can hunt kangaroos and emus. To my suggestion that regular showers would help the station garden crops, they replied that the garden did not need rain when the irrigation plant was pumping thousands of gallons over it.

Actual rain-making is a simple matter, but it depends entirely on the will and discretion of the magician. By one method, he kills a snake, and leaves it till putrefaction sets in before hanging it in a tree. He takes the spirit of this reptile, sings his instructions to it, and sends it into the sky to make rain. Thunder accompanying the storm is the voice of the growling snake, and lightning flashes are his flickering tongue. Wind preceding the rain is due to the snake rolling